

# LOS ANGELES TIMES

## **'Fuel' to the Fire of Oil Addiction**

By GARY GOLDSTEIN

"Fuel" is a vital, superbly assembled documentary that presents an insightful overview of America's troubled relationship with oil and how alternative and sustainable energies can reduce our country's -- and the world's -- addictive dependence on fossil fuels.

The film's structure is built around director-narrator Josh Tickell's personal journey of enlightenment, which started in childhood after moving with his family from idyllic Australia to murkier Louisiana, where he came to realize the oil-rich environment was being ravaged by the omnipotent petrochemical industry. Later, as a young adult, he spent 11 years crossing the country in his vegetable oil-powered "Veggie Van," promoting biofuels and compiling footage for what would become this impressively comprehensive film.

The events of Sept. 11 and Hurricane Katrina factor in both visually and thematically, providing provocative anchors for the movie's indictment of what Tickell believes is the Big Oil-cozy, ecologically indifferent Bush administration. Johnny O'Hara's WGA Award-nominated script doesn't dwell on muckraking, however; it's more focused on broadly inspiring viewers than preaching to the converted.

Interviews with a wide range of environmentalists, policy makers and educators, along with such "green" celebrities as Woody Harrelson, Sheryl Crow and Larry Hagman offer serious fuel for thought -- as well as for action. Smartly animated interstitials, memorable archival material and a lively soundtrack round out the fast-paced proceedings.

"Fuel." MPAA rating: unrated. Running time: 1 hour, 51 minutes.